

Sacred or Secular?

HOW STUDENT PERCEPTIONS CAN GUIDE LIBRARY SPACE DESIGN AND UTILIZATION

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THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

SACRED OR SECULAR?

- Purpose of Study
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Findings
- Conclusions

Purpose of Study

- Informing library renovations
- Seeking to validate/expand a previous research study
- Addressing lack of literature
- Comparing results between two institutions
- Identifying generalizable data

Literature Review

- “Library as Place”
- Inspirational campus spaces
- Inspirational library spaces

Literature Review

➤ Inspirational campus spaces

“Colleges and universities should never underestimate the power of special, transformational, and even sacred spaces on their campuses.” Sacred campus spaces provide an opportunity to connect students with the institution in “...a deeply personal or spiritual experience that has great meaning.”

Earl Broussard “The Power of Place on Campus” [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) 5/1/09

Literature Review

Inspirational library spaces – What qualities make library space sacred?

- Feelings inspired by the space
- Architectural details
- Inherent quality of the space
- Similarity to religious spaces

Literature Review

➤ Feelings inspired by the space

“...an academic library might invoke spiritual feelings in students.” A student stated that “sometimes, when I go into a beautiful traditional library I feel like I’m going into a church. Not because it feels religious but because I’m filled with a special sense of connectedness to the university’s scholarly traditions.”

Jackson/Hahn “Serving Higher Education’s Highest Goals: Assessment of the Academic Library as Place”
College & Research Libraries September 2011

Literature Review

➤ Feelings inspired by the space

students wanting “rooms that inspire”

Fister “The Glorious Study Hall: How Libraries Nurture a Life of the Mind” *Library Issues* November 2009

students “... want to experience a sense of inspiration.”

Freeman “The Library as Place: Changes in Learning Patterns, Collections, Technology and Use” in Library as Place: Rethinking Roles, Rethinking Space 2005

Literature Review

➤ Architectural details

“mahogany paneling, wooden bookshelves, overstuffed armchairs, and traditional reading rooms with high ceilings and long tables.”

Fister

“the traditional reading room ... - the great, vaulted, light-filled space whose walls are lined with books they may never pull off the shelf.”

Freeman

Literature Review

➤ Inherent quality of the space

Use the term “conduciveness to scholarship” in echoing the theme of a library space with value independent of the materials in it.

Antell/Engel “Stimulating Space, Serendipitous Space: Library as Place in the Life of a Scholar” in The Library as Place 2007

Literature Review

➤ Similarity to religious spaces

“...while it would be too bold to propose libraries might take the place of churches, there is this parallel: we visit libraries to find quiet space and room for reflections.”

Carpenter “The Sacred Space of Libraries in Our Lives” BigThink.com 9/27/2010

“...it is not mere courtesy that causes people to become silent in the library, as they do in a church: Libraries are sacred places.”

Benton “A Laboratory of Collaborative Learning” The Chronicle of Higher Education 8/7/2009

Literature Review

- Could Inspirational Space Lead to Measurable Benefits in Recruiting and Retention?

“People may indeed view it (library space) as a tangible representation of the institution’s abstract mission.”

Jackson/Hahn

Notes that "sacred campus spaces provide an opportunity to connect students with the institution.”

Mentions value of space in regards to creating lasting relationships for alumni.

Broussard

Literature Review

- Jackson/Hahn article
- Research assessing abstract concepts rather than based on anecdotal evidence or a satisfaction survey
- Investigated whether traditional looking library spaces and objects in those spaces made for a more inspirational experience for students and whether those spaces and objects brought about a measurable link to the university's mission
- Created a paper-based survey that was accompanied by a flipbook containing images of traditional and modern spaces as well as library items
- In addition to demographic questions, asked for feelings about and expected use of spaces/objects in images and whether they would contribute to the university mission

Literature Review

- Jackson/Hahn article
- Administered to 54 students at three large public research universities (University of AZ, University of IL at Urbana-Champaign, University of MD)
- Concluded that students preferred the traditional spaces to those identified as modern spaces
- Students indicated that they would visit the traditional spaces more frequently
- Traditional spaces were regarded as spiritual to a greater degree than the modern spaces
- Traditional spaces were viewed as being more supportive of the university mission

Literature Review

- Jackson/Hahn article

- Suggested four recommendations for further studies:
 - having a larger sample size,
 - including students from a variety of academic institutions,
 - looking at virtual spaces, and
 - including public libraries.

Methodology

- Followed two of the Jackson/Hahn recommendations:
 - having a larger sample size
 - including students from a variety of academic institutions

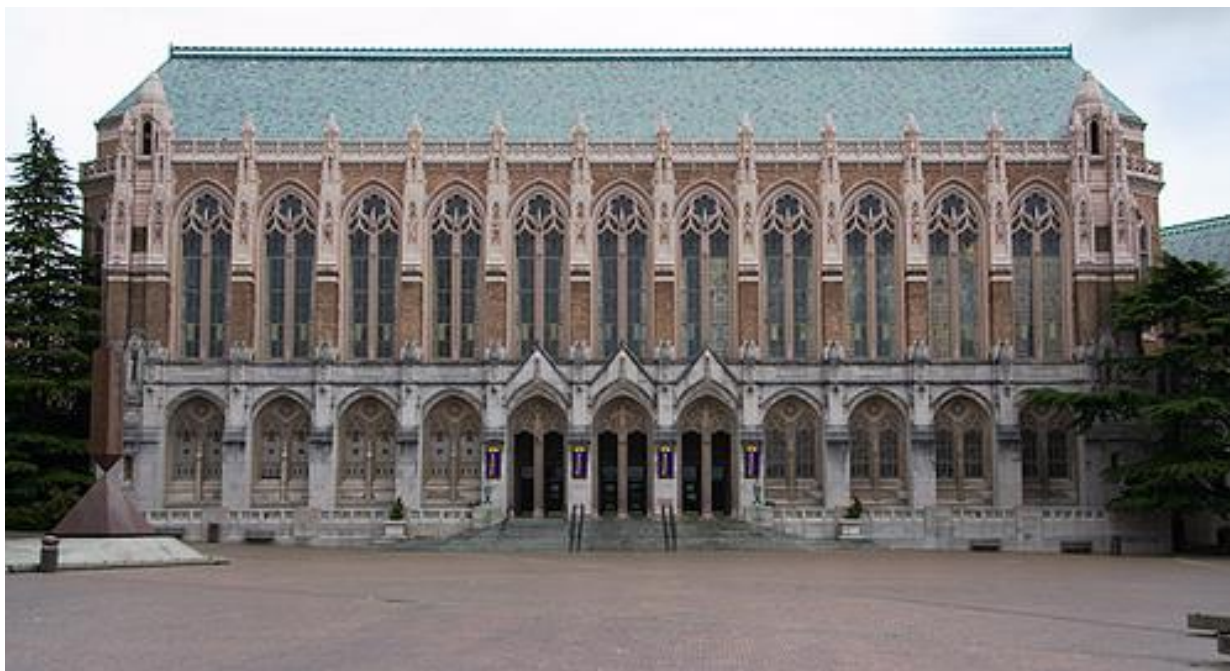
- Created a survey instrument using Jackson/Hahn as a starting point
 - Shortened survey eliminating a number of questions
 - Decided to only use library images and not include items

Methodology

- Created image pool of library exteriors and interiors
 - Used only library buildings
 - Did not use any local libraries
 - For interiors, used only high ceilings and images with books
- Normed images using student review

Methodology

Traditional Exteriors



Suzzalo Library,
University of Washington



Perkins Library,
Duke University

Methodology

Modern Exteriors



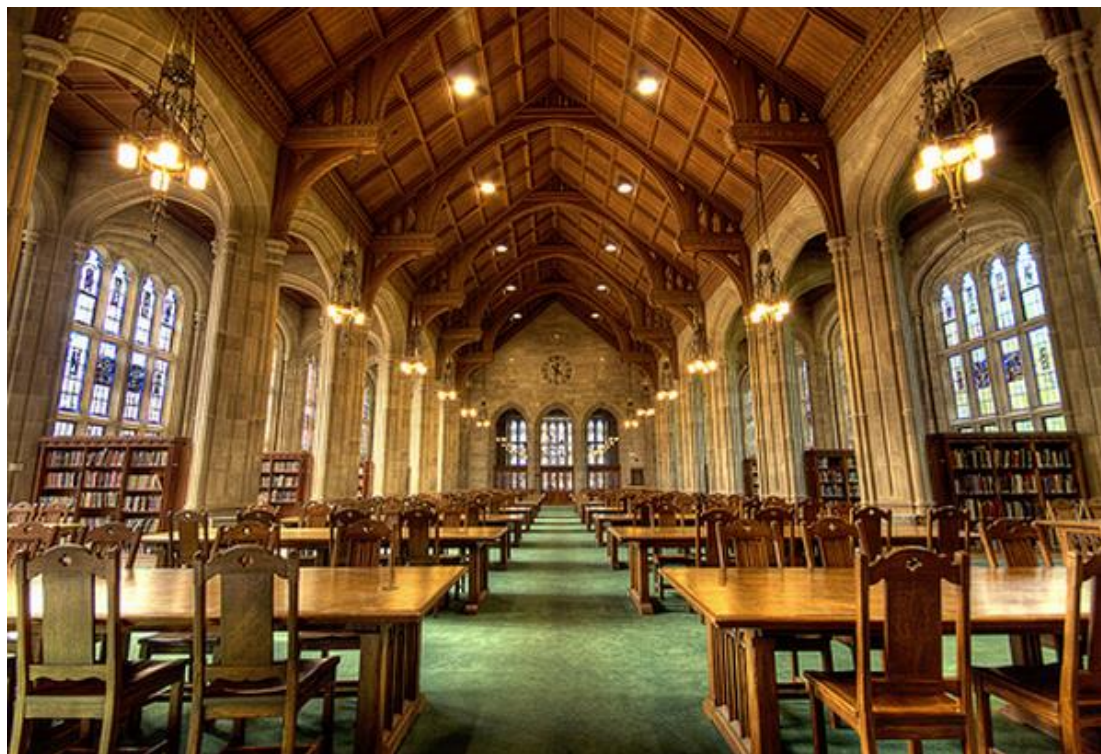
Hunt Library,
North Carolina State University



Thompson Library,
Ohio State University

Methodology

Traditional Interiors



Bapst Library,
Boston College



Fisher Fine Arts Library,
University of Pennsylvania

Methodology

Modern Interiors



Brody Learning Commons,
Johns Hopkins University



Philological Library,
Free University of Berlin

Methodology

- Met with U of L Institutional Research
 - Reviewed draft survey and image pool for question clarity and survey design input
 - Decided on online survey
 - Use of split-randomization led to four survey versions
- Surveys administered over a two-week period
 - Four laptops set up at each institution
 - Students randomly assigned to a survey version
 - 312 completed U of L surveys and 165 completed SBTS surveys

Methodology

Library Spaces survey instrument

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age: ☐ 22 or below ☐ 23–30 ☐ 31–50 ☐ 51–65 ☐ 66+

3. Student status:

Undergraduate: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior

Graduate: ☐ Master's student ☐ Research Doctoral student (Ph. D.) ☐ Professional doctoral student (J.D., D. Min.)

4. ☐ Live on-campus ☐ Live off-campus

5. Major field of study: _____ (fill in the blank)

6. How frequently do you use our library?

☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than once a month

7. How frequently do you use the electronic resources provided by the library?

☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than once a month

Methodology

Please examine the image marked “A” above.

This is the main library at a research university. This library houses most of the collections and serves undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff. The library is open 7 days a week and offers reference services, study spaces, and access to computers, scanners/copiers, and printers.

Please answer the following questions regarding this library:

1. My initial feelings about this library are _____.

☐ Very positive ☐ Somewhat positive ☐ Neutral/No opinion ☐ Somewhat negative ☐ Very negative

2. As a student I would want to use this library _____.

☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Infrequently ☐ Never

3. Choose the *one phrase* that best describes the purpose for which you would be most likely to use this library:

Independent study

Group study

Using hard-copy materials (books, journals, special collections)

Using electronic library resources (online articles, e-books)

Using internet-based resources (Web pages, social networking, blogs)

Methodology

4. The mission statements of most universities and colleges include academic progress, creative accomplishment, cultural enrichment, and social engagement. How well do you feel the library pictured above would support these values?

☐ Strongly ☐ Somewhat ☐ Minimally ☐ Not at all

Please reexamine the image. For each of the following pairs, please circle the word that best describes your immediate emotional response to the image.

Overwhelmed
Comfortable

Scholarly
Uninformed

Focused
Distracted

Studious
Leisurely

Spiritual/sacred
Secular/non-spiritual

Energized
Lethargic

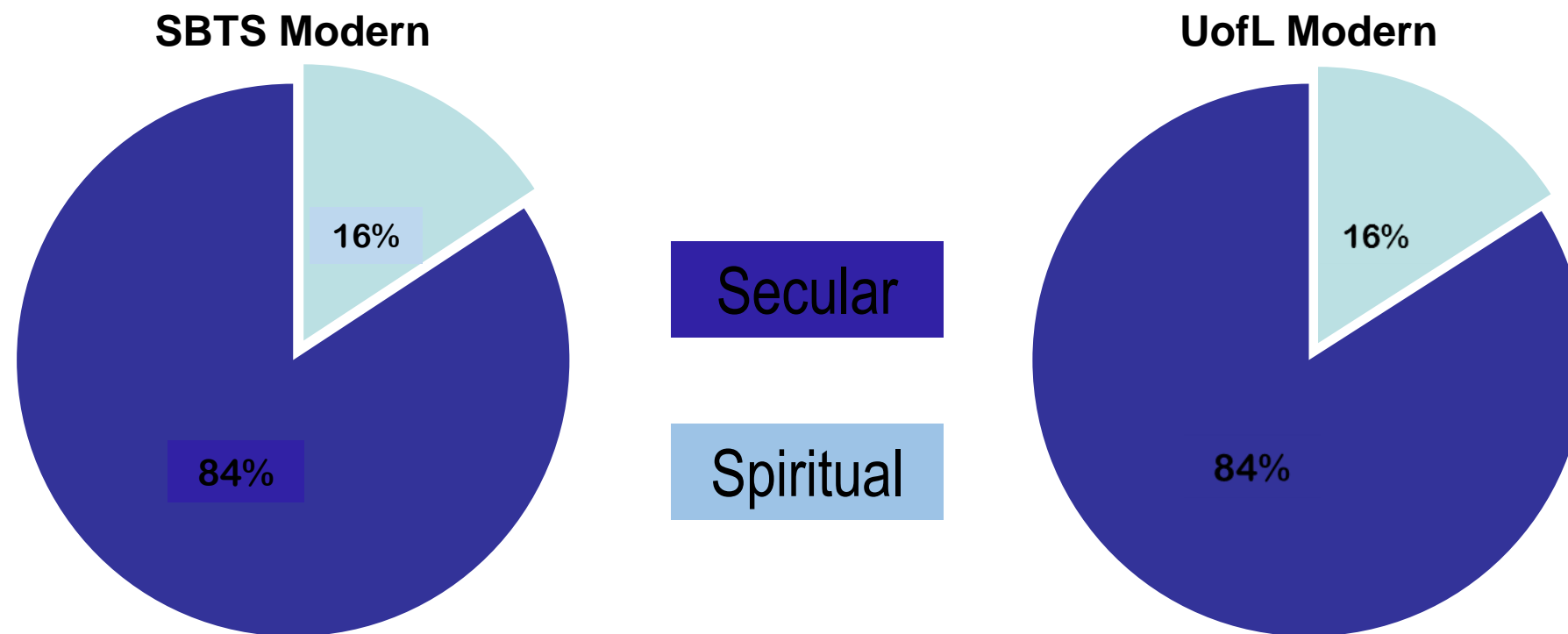
Disorganized
Organized

FINDINGS

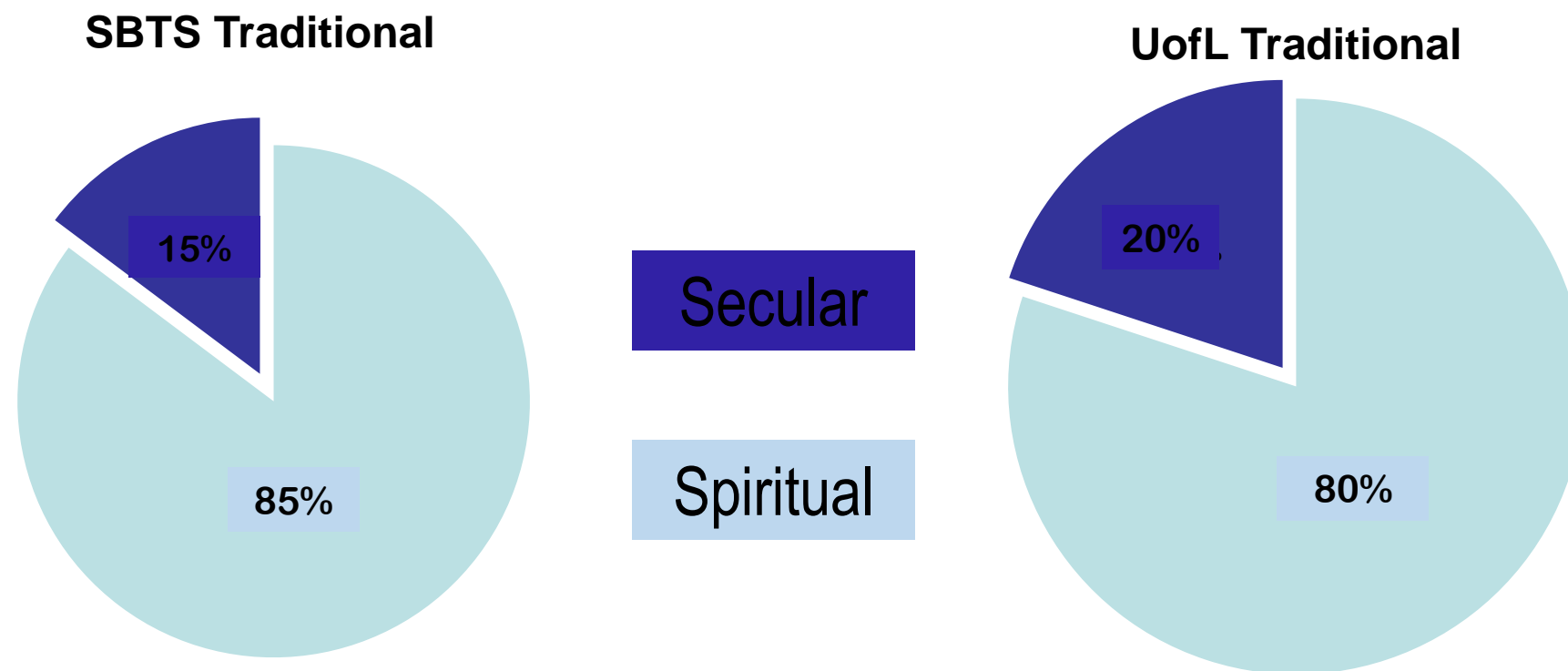
DATA and ANALYSIS

- Spiritual/Secular Results
- Usage Indications
- Mission Statement Support
- Cross-Institutional Comparisons
- Demographic Analysis
- Conclusions

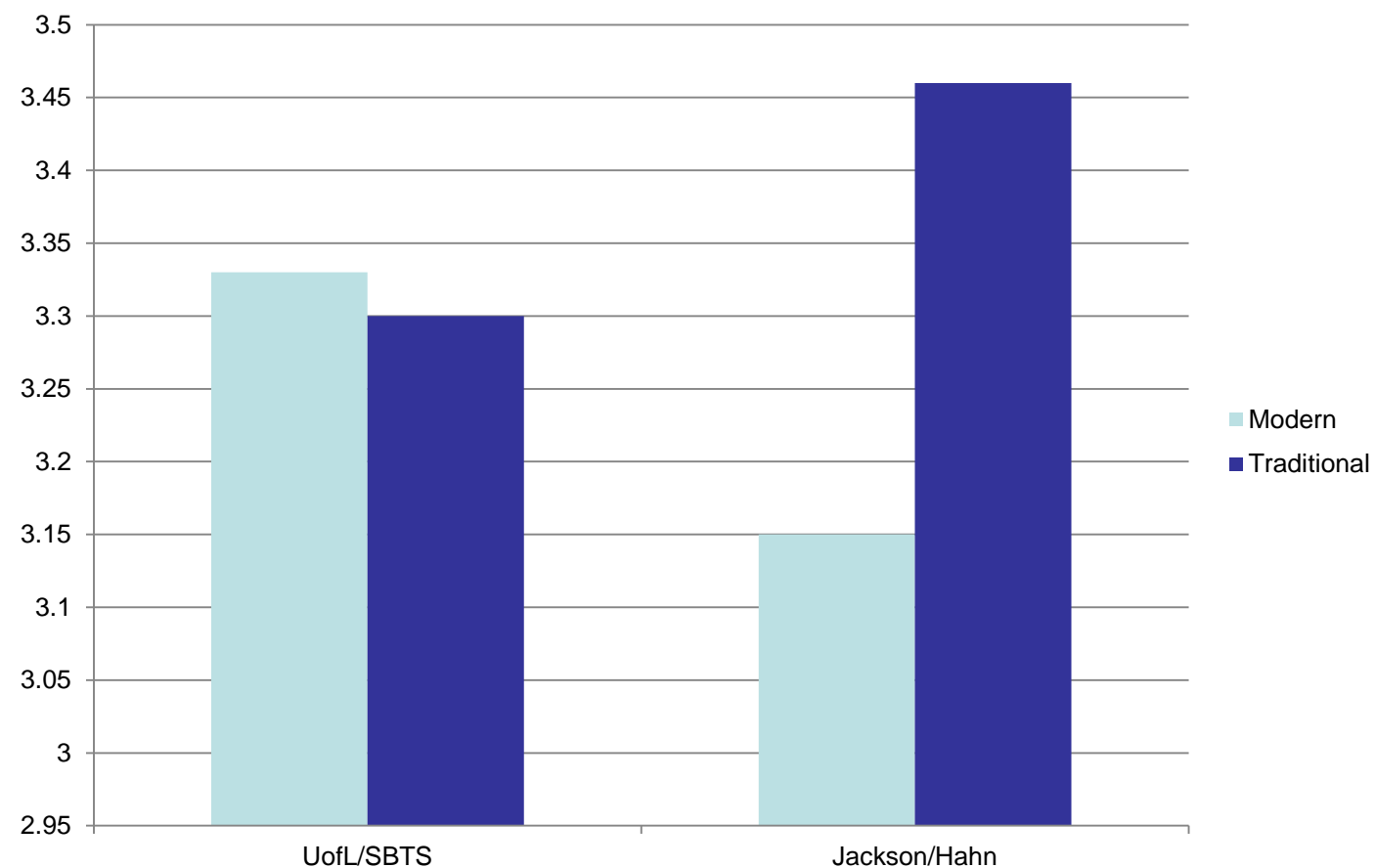
SPIRITUAL VS. SECULAR DESIGNATION



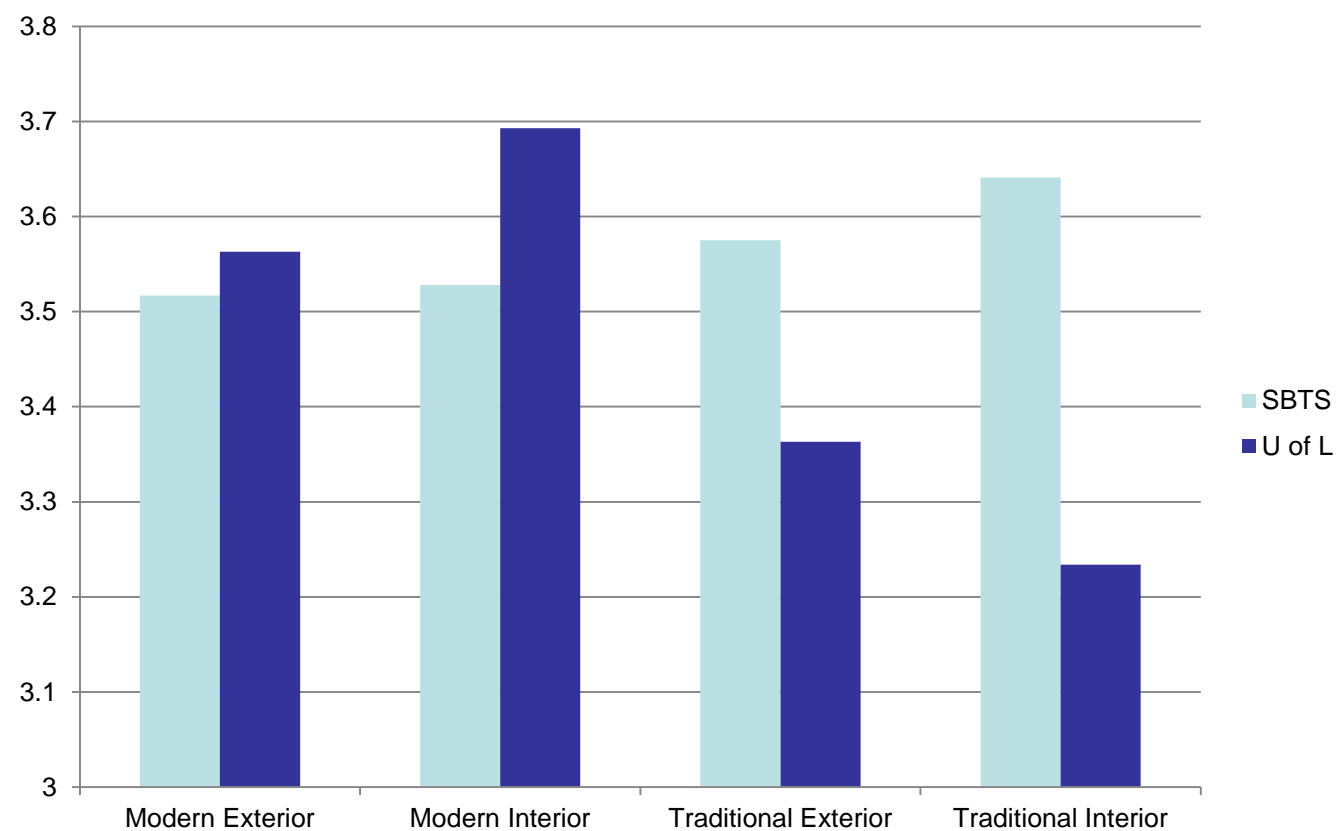
SPIRITUAL VS. SECULAR DESIGNATION



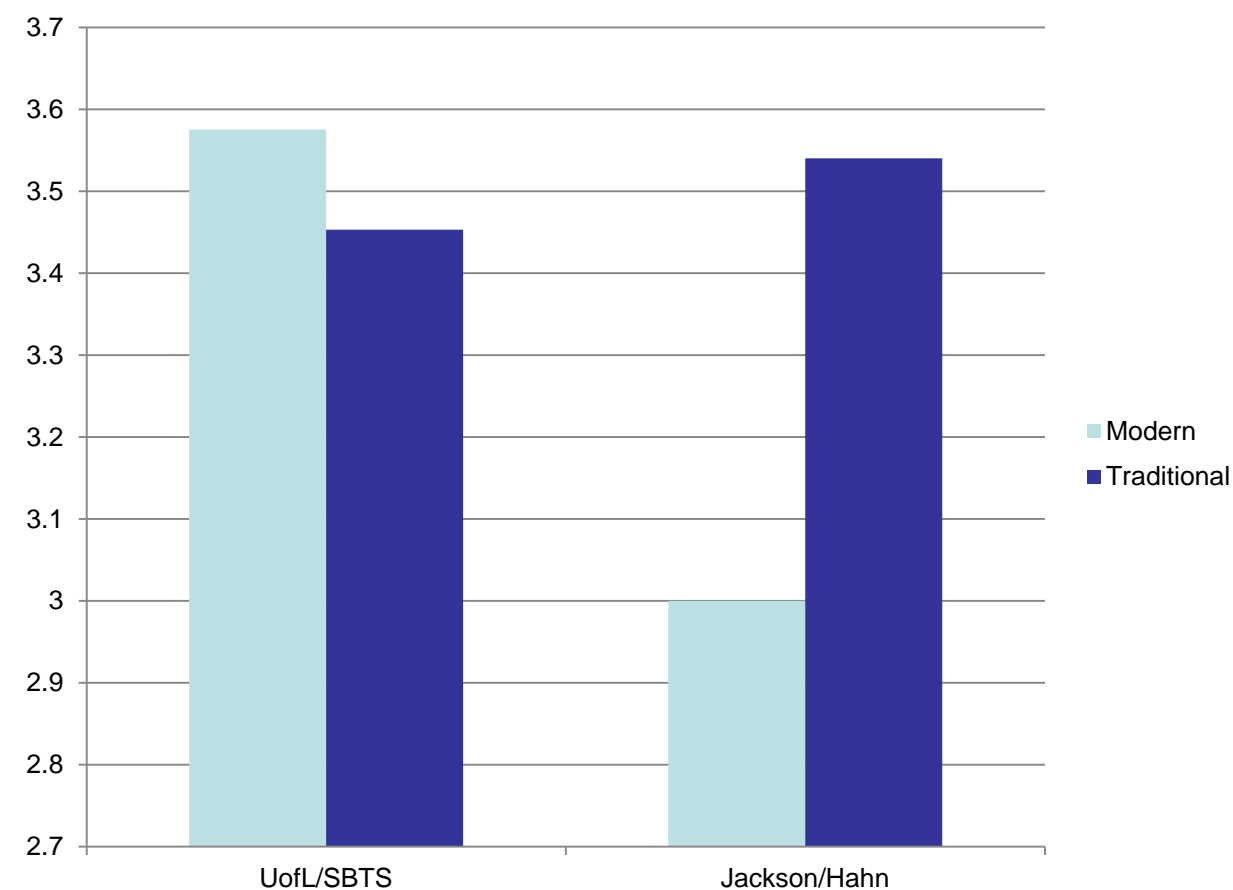
Baseline Current Use – Combined UofL/SBTS and Jackson/Hahn (Coded Means)



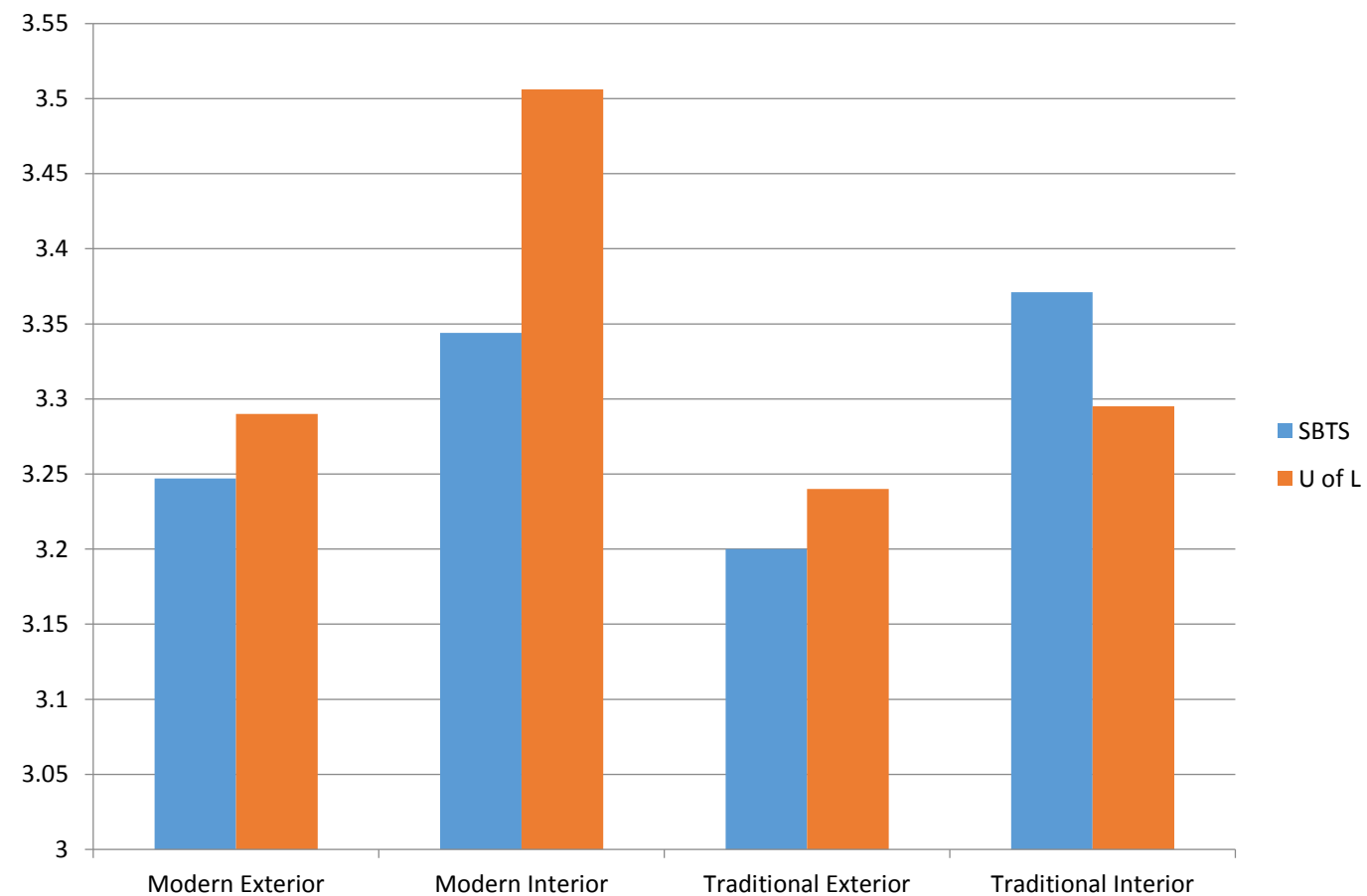
Responses to “Likely to Use” UofL/SBTS (Coded Means)



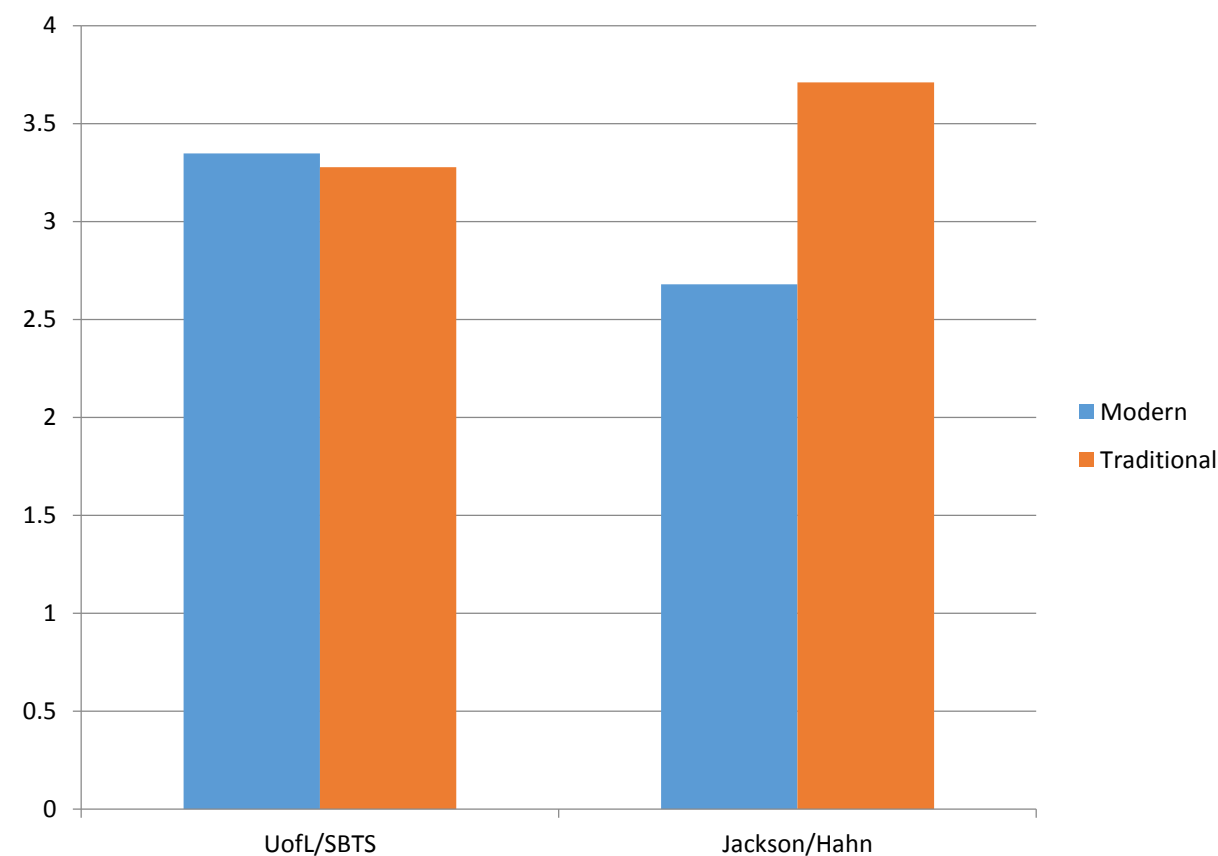
Responses to “Likely to Use” UofL/SBTS and Jackson/Hahn (Coded Means)



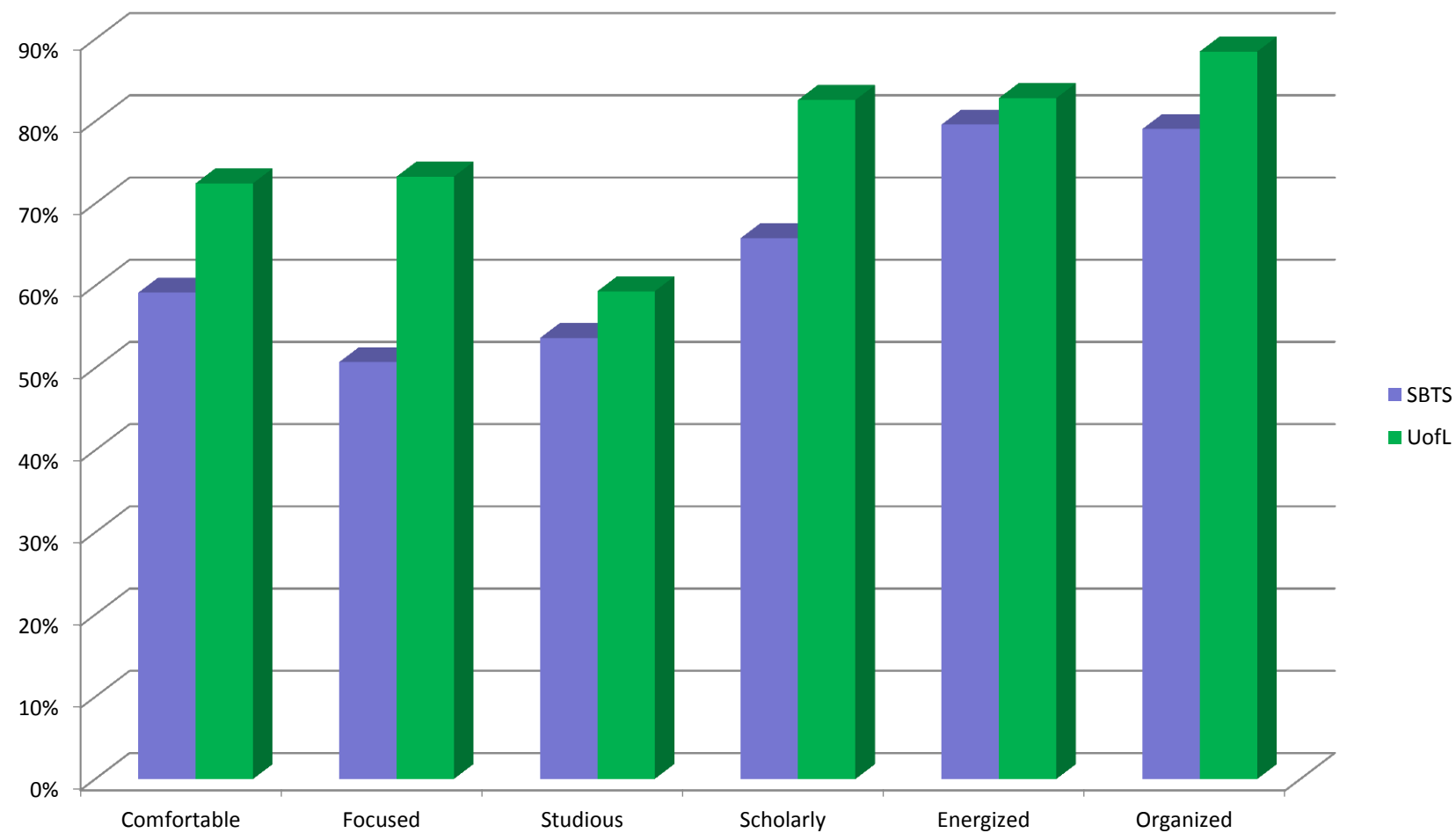
Responses to “Mission Statement Support” UofL and SBTS (Coded Means)



Responses to “Mission Statement Support” UofL/SBTS and Jackson-Hahn (Coded Means)

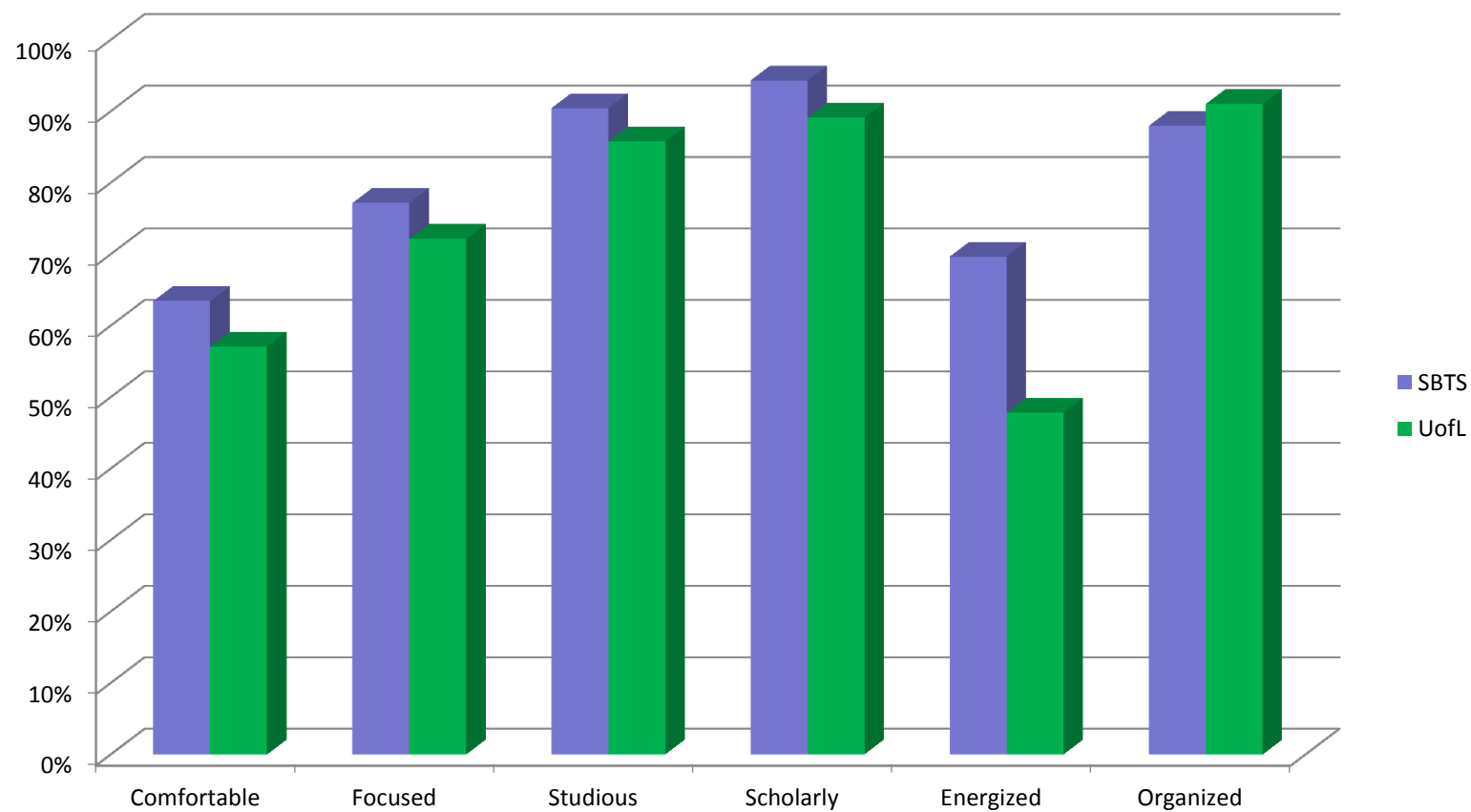


Other Word-Pair Responses UofL/SBTS Modern Images

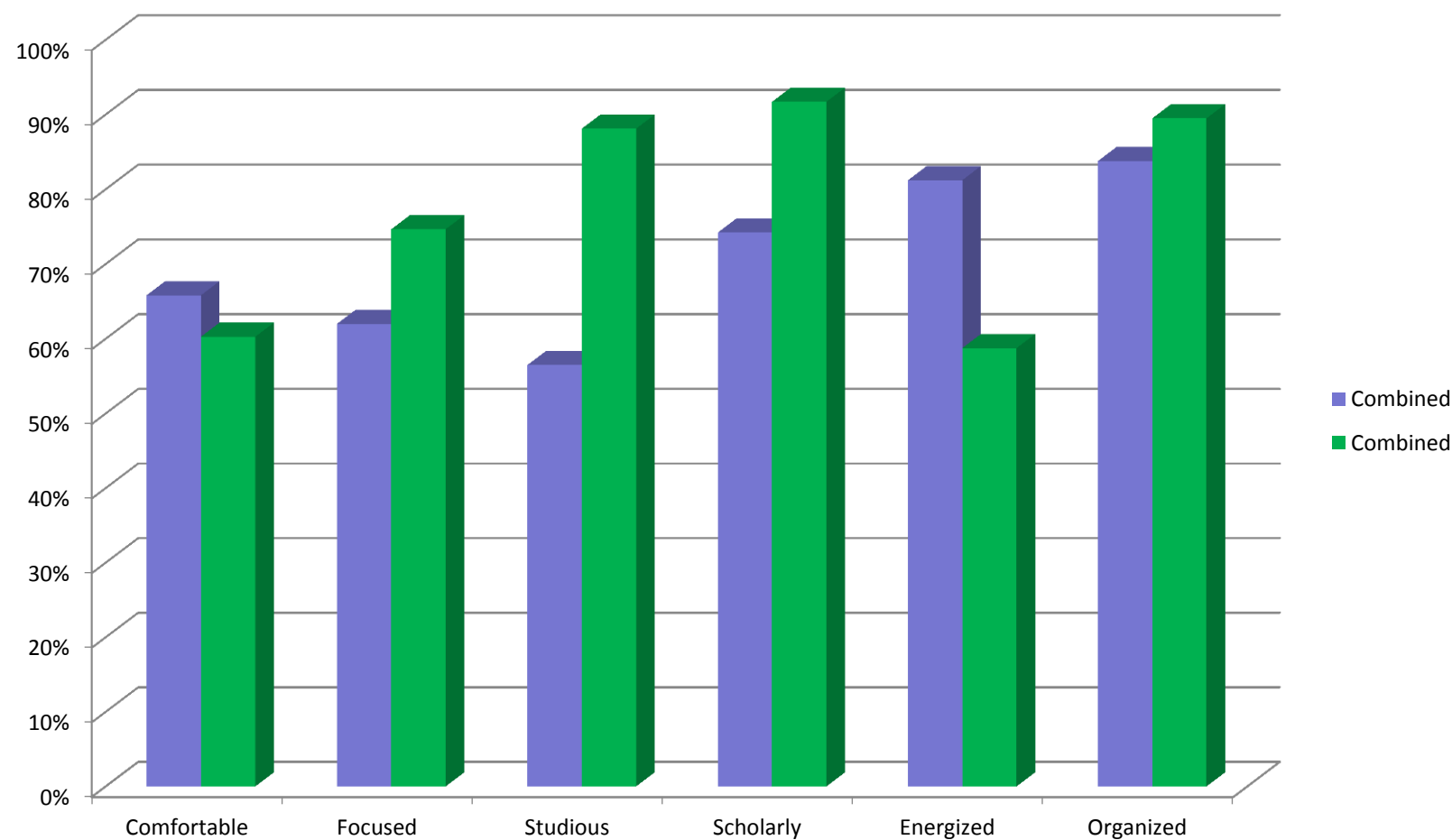


Other Word-Pair Responses

UofL/SBTS Traditional Images

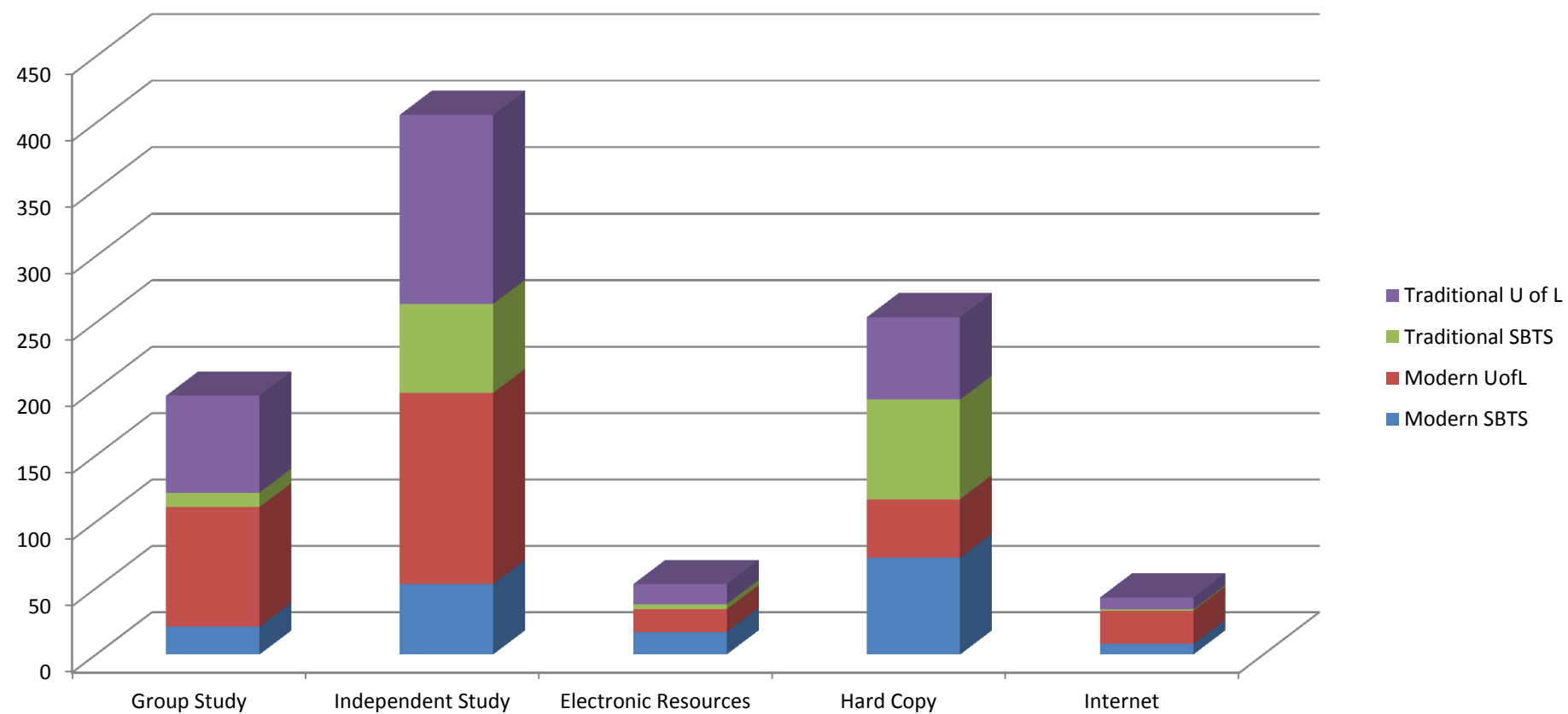


Other Word-Pair Responses UofL/SBTS Combined



Phrase to Describe Purpose UofL/SBTS All Spaces

(Each student voted twice)



Comparison by Student Classification Demographic

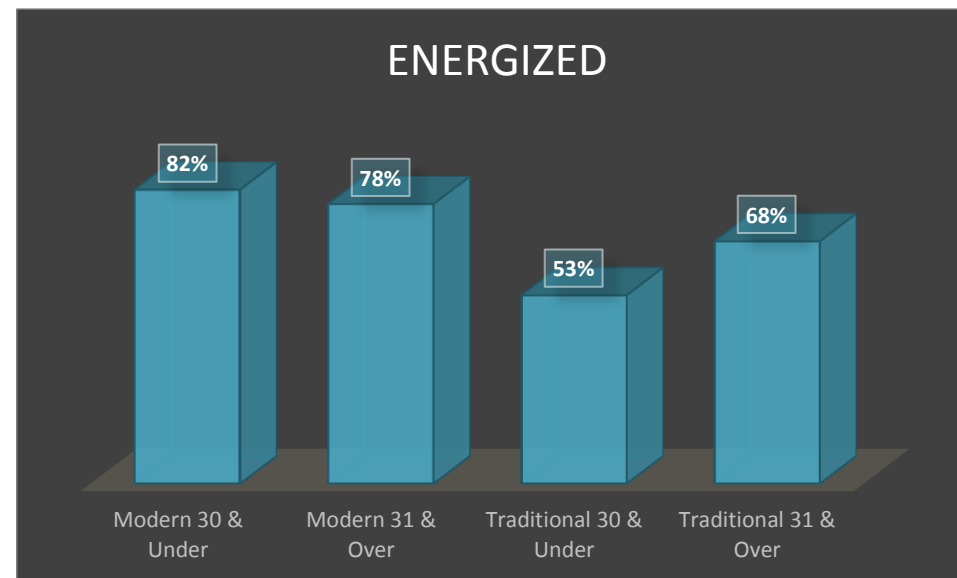
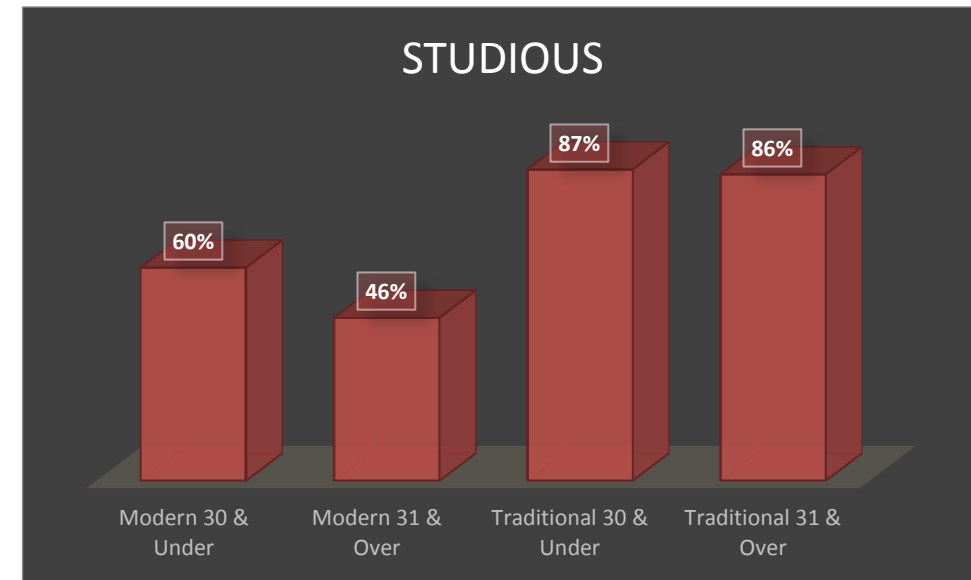
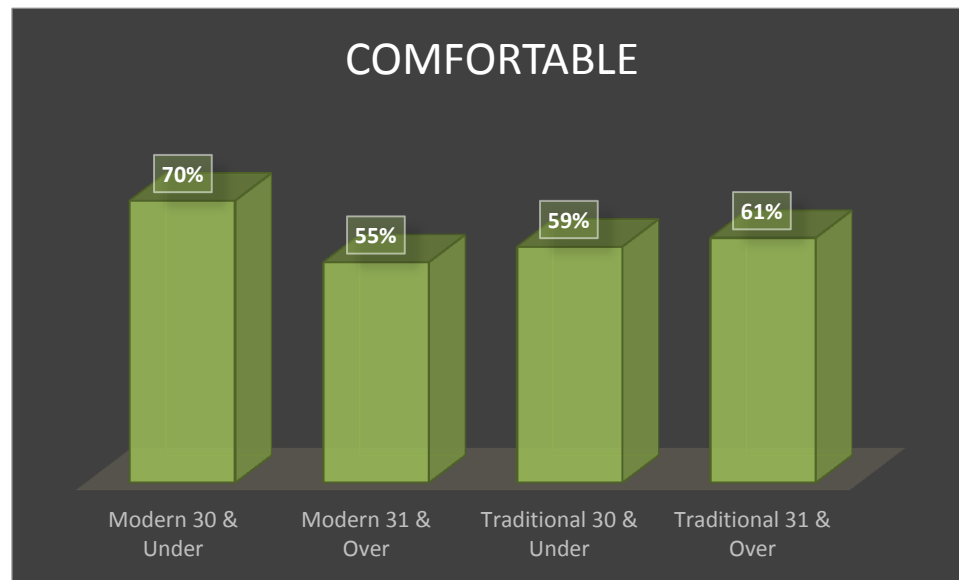
All Responses

Image	Current Use		Likely to Use		Mission Support	
	SBTS	U of L	SBTS	U of L	SBTS	U of L
Modern Exterior	3.188	3.506	3.517	3.563	3.247	3.290
Modern Interior	3.149	3.472	3.528	3.693	3.344	3.506
Traditional Exterior	3.262	3.337	3.575	3.363	3.2	3.240
Traditional Interior	3.217	3.382	3.641	3.234	3.371	3.295

Masters Responses

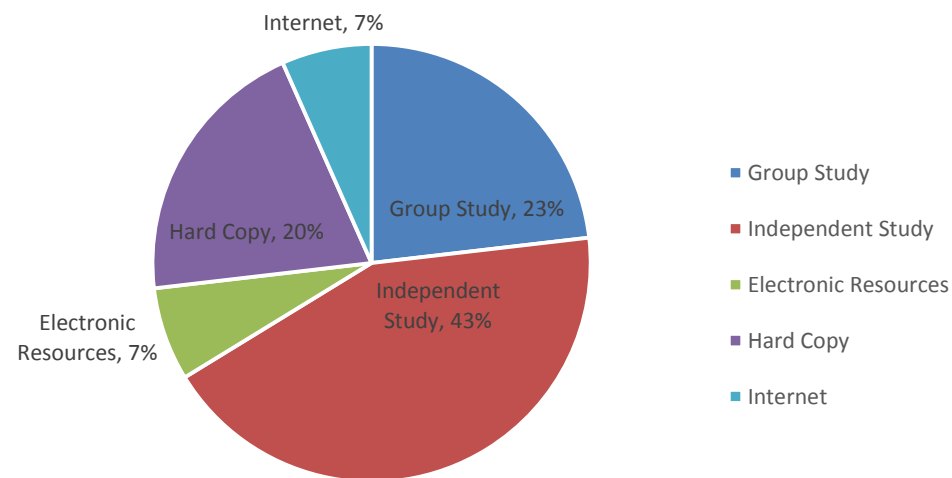
Image	Current Use		Likely to Use		Mission Support	
	SBTS	U of L	SBTS	U of L	SBTS	U of L
Modern Exterior	3.131	3.3	3.421	3.1	3.078	3.1
Modern Interior	3.1	3.214	3.325	3.428	3.2	3.5
Traditional Exterior	3.244	3.272	3.565	3.363	3.173	3.09
Traditional interior	3.279	3.428	3.590	3.0	3.409	3.142

Word Pairs By Age Demographics

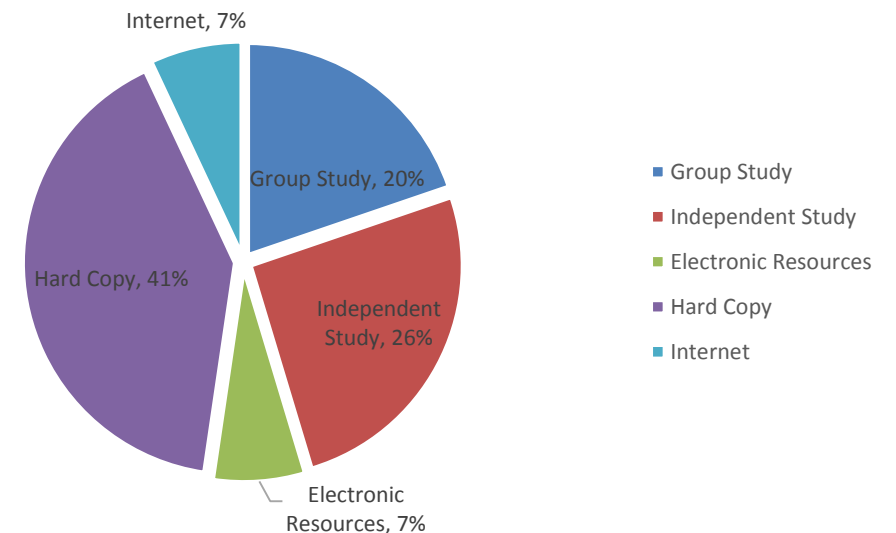


Phrase to Describe Purpose By Age Demographics

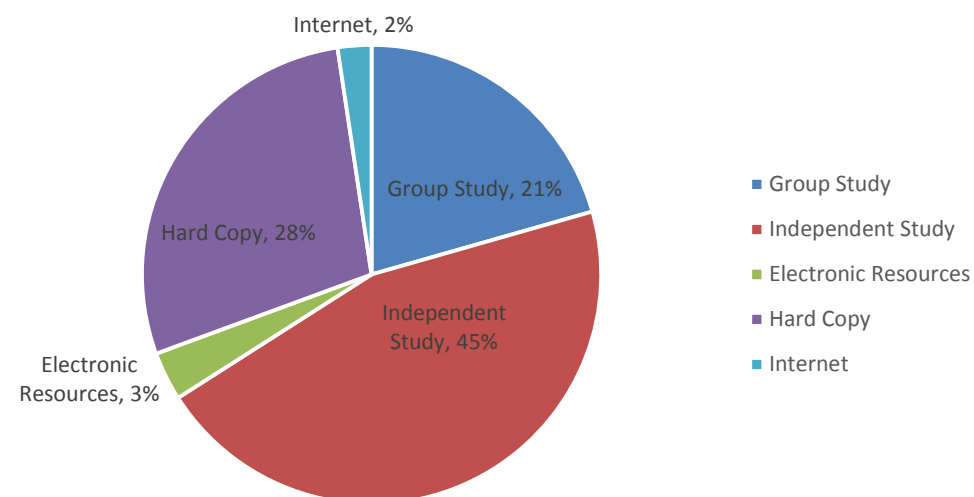
Modern 30 & Under



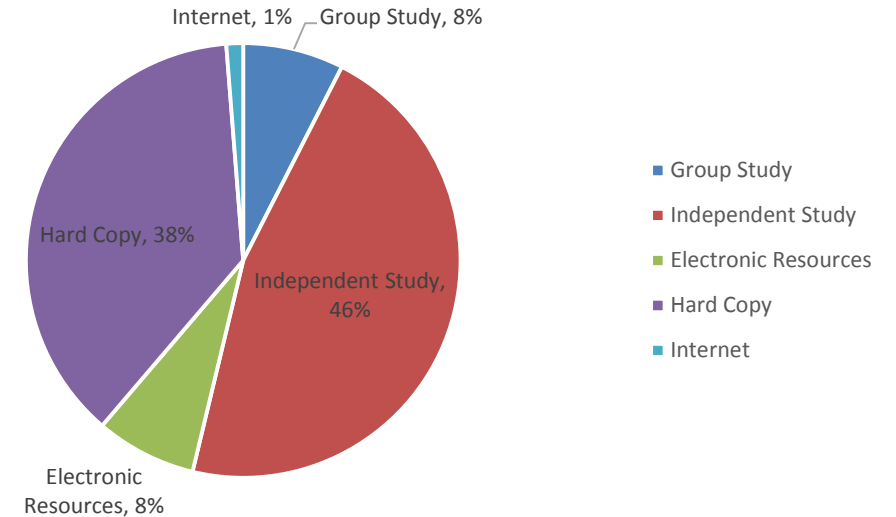
Modern 31 & Over



Traditional 30 & Under



Traditional 31 & Over



Qualifications

- UofL: Modern Architecture | Multiple Disciplines | Public
- SBTS: Traditional Architecture | Few Disciplines | Private
- UofL Responses: Under representation of graduate students
- SBTS Responses: Slight over representation of research doctoral students

Qualifications

UofL Exteriors



Ekstrom Library (East Wing)



Ekstrom Library (West Wing)

Qualifications

SBTS Exterior



James P. Boyce Centennial Library

Conclusions

- Validated Jackson/Hahn findings that students would identify traditional/modern architecture as spiritual/secular
- Did not validate Jackson/Hahn findings that students would prefer traditional/spiritual spaces
- UofL students expressed a preference for modern spaces
- SBTS students responded positively toward modern and traditional spaces with a slight preference for a traditional interior
- Students overall expressed a desire for improved spaces – modern or traditional
- Age may influence how students perceive and use library spaces

